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FOR NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/16/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: ROYG FORCES KILL SEVEN IN SOUTH YEMEN IN SEPERATE
INCIDENTS

REF: SANAA 1878

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Press reports indicate that four people were killed and another 15 were injured on October 13 when police opened fire on a large group of Yemenis preparing a demonstration to mark the 44th anniversary of the 1963 uprising in Southern Yemen against British occupation. The event took place in the Radfan area of Lahj Governorate approximately 270 kilometers south of Sana'a. Opposition MP Nasser al-Khabji told a German news agency that the police "opened fire indiscriminately at protesters." Also according to press reports, the police claim that the protesters fired on them first. President Saleh, in a speech on October 14, said, "I feel sorrow for such incidents, but those who provoke demonstrations are responsible for what happened." The Yemen Observatory for Human Rights, an independent human rights organization, released a statement October 14 strongly condemning the event, calling it a "violation of people's right to life by some riot police who blindly achieve (follow the) orders of authority." A source at al-Jazeera told the embassy that all news crews had been banned from filming the scene. He added that al-Jazeera had managed to shoot some film but was threatened by ROYG officials that, if the film aired, the al-Jazeera office in Sana'a would be closed.

¶2. (S) Also in Lahj, just before midnight on October 13, a ROYG patrol came upon a tribal roadblock. It is unclear exactly what ensued, but security sources indicate that the two groups entered into a firefight in which three of the tribesmen were killed. Tribal roadblocks are not uncommon in rural Yemen. They often are set up to keep outsiders from entering tribally controlled lands. On other occasions they act as unofficial toll booths collecting "fees" for the right to travel on "tribal roads." At first the two events, happening in the same area on the same day, created some confusion and observers speculated that one of the events may have, in fact, been a garbled report of the other. The Ministry of Information, however, confirmed to emboff on October 16 that they were separate incidents.

¶3. (S) Comment. These events, while tragic, are not entirely unexpected. Tensions have been mounting in the south for some time. Reftel predicted increasing protests, specifically citing the October 14 holiday and President Saleh's reported vow to deal with the issue in the south "once and for all."
SECHE